DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 466 415 SO 033 943

TITLE	Gram's Trunk. Curriculum Guides for Education.
INSTITUTION	Herbert Hoover Presidential Library-Museum, West Branch, IA.
PUB DATE	2002-00-00
NOTE	9p.
AVAILABLE FROM	Herbert Hoover Presidential Library and Museum, 210 Parkside Drive, Box 488, West Branch, IA 52358. Tel: 319-643-5301. For full text: http://www.hoover.archives.gov/education/gramstrunk.html.
PUB TYPE	Guides - Classroom - Teacher (052)
EDRS PRICE	MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS	Curriculum Enrichment; Elementary Education; *Family History; Heritage Education; *Material Culture; Primary Sources; *Social History; Social Studies; Story Reading; *Student Research

ABSTRACT

This story and activities are intended to motivate students, grades K-8, to investigate history. The story "Gram's Trunk"-- is about a family's memories being saved by the grandmother, and about her daughter and granddaughter visiting her to look at the objects stored in the trunk. The activities are varied, but nearly all have to do with the student's own family, such as studying a period in history by studying what was happening in your family at the time, researching what was happening to your family during an earlier decade, or doing newspaper and/or magazine research in the public library to investigate what was happening on a family member's birth date. (BT)

Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made
from the original document.

ED 466 415

National Archives and Records Administration

HERBERT HOOVER
Presidential Library and Museum

Curriculum Guides for Education

Gram's Trunk

The Herbert Hoover Presidential Library - Museum
210 Parkside Drive
Box 488
West Branch, Iowa 52358
319-643-5301
http://hoover.archives.gov/education/gramstrunk.html

SO 033 943

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
Office of Educational Research and Improvement
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)
☑ This document has been reproduced as received from the person or organization originating it.
☐ Minor changes have been made to improve reproduction quality.
• Points of view or opinions stated in this document do not necessarily represent official OERI position or policy.

Presidential Libraries of the National Archives and Records Administration

The Presidential Library system is made up of ten Presidential Libraries. This nationwide network of libraries is administered by the Office of Presidential Libraries, which is part of the National Archives and Records Administration (NARA), located in College Park, MD. These are not traditional libraries, but rather repositories for preserving and making available the papers, records, and other historical materials of U.S. Presidents since Herbert Hoover.

Each Presidential Library contains a museum and provides an active series of public programs. Also included in the Presidential Library system is the Nixon Presidential Materials Staff, which administers the Nixon Presidential materials under the terms of the Presidential Recordings and Materials Preservation Act, and the William J. Clinton Presidential Materials Project in Little Rock, Arkansas, which administers the Clinton Presidential materials. When a President leaves office, NARA establishes a Presidential project until a new Presidential library is built and transferred to the Government.

HERBERT HOOVER: Gram's Trunk

"Gram's Trunk" -- A story and activities to motivate students to investigate history (K-8th)

Introduction

"Gram's Trunk" is a story about a family's memories being saved by the grandmother. The mother and daughter have gone to Grandmother B's house to visit and look at objects stored in the trunk.

"Gram's Trunk" can be used as a starting point to motivate students to investigate the past, especially as it relates to themselves.

Gram's Trunk

Grandmother B' keeps things. She always puts the date, month, day and year on birthday cards she gets or sends. Corsages and boutonnieres from parties or big celebrations rest tied up with ribbon in their boxes with a note on top about the event, the dress or the jacket it was worn on and the date.

Gram is the family historian. She doesn't call herself that; she just says she is sentimental, "she keeps memories."

Mom and I have come to Gram's to see inside the trunk.

Gram lives a half mile off the highway down a gravel road. Grandpa and Gram built the two story house in 1951. Grandpa died in 1989 but Gram still lives in their home. The house is white with green shutters now but it's been other colors too. I remember it blue and a soft green. White is new last summer.

"Gram, we're here!" Renne calls through the back door into the kitchen. Nobody but company uses Gram's front door. It's not used much because Gram knows lots of people, so nobody's company.

The kitchen is the heart of the home. It's a large room with a table and chairs. The table always has a centerpiece, whatever treasure Gram has found on her daily walk. In the spring or summer she picks little wild flowers along the road. She gathers leaves and sticks in the fall and rocks or pine cones in the winter. "Look for the little surprises." She always says the little ones are best.

Cooking smells always greet you at Grams. Blackberry cobbler is today's treat. It smells warm, sweet, reddish blue, safe.

"We'll have a tea party later, Renne," Gram says as she sees me eyeing the cobbler resting on the breadboard Grandpa had built into the baking cabinet. Beneath the bread board is a

flour bin that holds 50 lbs. of flour for bread, rolls, cobblers and sometimes pies. Pies are too formal, Gram believes, and more likely to break coming out of the pie plate.

Tea Parties are one of Grandmother's little surprises. Tea Parties come after hard work, afternoon naps, (Gram grew up in the south, where people work hard early in the day and rest when it's hot, in the afternoon), when she knows we are sad, or for no good reason.

Tea parties always have pretty napkins, and a full set of silverware, real plates. Food can range from rolls hot from the oven to a glass of pop with a straw that bends, but the emphasis is on little. One roll, or a tiny cup of hot chocolate, a little juice glass of pop or a single oatmeal cookie are on the menu of Gram's tea parties. I know now they are a chance for us to talk. Gram and I have had them in the middle of the night when I had a nightmare or just woke up. All her grandkids love Tea Parties although my brothers are not always pleased with just a cookie or tiny glass of pop.

"Lets go upstairs and see the trunk!" Gram was excited about sharing her treasures with us. We crossed the living room to the stairway door. The living room at Gram's is just that, a living room. There is no family room. This room dresses up for parties and down for games of Dominos and Rook.

"Renne, notice that the stairs don't creak. Grandpa was so proud of this stairway. I don't know exactly how he managed to build it this way but it never has developed a noise."

Upstairs at Gram's house are four bedrooms. The trunk is in the last room on the right.

"Gram, how did you choose what you kept in the trunk?" I asked as we approached it under a west window.

"It was hard sometimes, when I was busy, to remember to include memories. This trunk is a history of our family, it's like digging up the ruins of a civilization. There are layers of items with the oldest things on the bottom layer and the newest on top."

"Do you still add items to the trunk?" my mother asked, "Or did you stop after all of us were gone from home?"

"I didn't exactly stop but items go in much more slowly now," Grandmother said. "Now I put in items from a big family party or things around the house I think should be saved for grandchildren. I thought we could go through the stuff in the trunk and I'd tell you about each item. Does that sound okay?"

"Sure, that would be great!" Mom said.

We three raised the trunk lid with a sense of excitement. I thought how amazing it was that a family's history would be gathered and kept over the years so faithfully.

The very top layer of the trunk were grandchildren's tiny hand prints, some painted on

paper and some imprinted in clay, Christmas presents made, signed, dated and kept with love.

Just under the hand prints were Gram's very best linen and lace tablecloths.

"The linen cloth and napkins belonged to my grandmother" Gram said. "I use this only on special occasions, like wedding receptions or graduation parties. Mother gave it to me after my Grandmother died."

"You never machine wash linens like this. I wash them by hand and line dry them. Linen can't be starched either, that causes the fabric to rot in the trunk. I wrap these cloths in tissue paper to help protect them," Gram said as she gently laid the tissue back over them.

Two quilts were on the next layer. One was a wedding ring pattern quilt with many small colored shapes.

"The pieces of this quilt came from dresses my sisters and I had," Gram told us. "When a dress was outgrown Mother would cut out the best areas for quilt pieces. She made quilts in the wintertime when there were fewer outside chores to be done. After dinner, while we did homework, mother sat and pieced the quilt top. Quilting is a very long process, but the result is worth it."

Several boxes of various sizes came next. Some had labels on top and others were plain.

"Gram, what did you save in the boxes?" I asked, eager to continue the trip back though the family's history.

"Women always wore gloves to church, weddings and funerals. Since Grandpa was a minister I always needed clean gloves so I had several pairs of white and black ones. I wore the white ones to church Sundays and Wednesday nights and to weddings. Grandpa got phone calls or unplanned visits from couples wanting him to marry them and I'd be expected to be the witness so I kept an outfit with gloves always ready. You never wore totally white outfits to a wedding. Only the bride wore white. I don't think anyone follows that practice anymore."

The gloves in the box were neatly divided, three black pairs on one side and five pairs of white on the other. Gram has small hands so the gloves seemed rather small. Not one pair was identical to another.

One black pair had three buttons on the inside so it fit snug at the wrist. Another pair had three diamonds cut out on the top of the hand. I could tell by watching Gram as she held each pair that these gloves had been to many events in her life.

"I've always loved pretty greeting cards," Gram said almost apologetically. "Grandpa always gave me special cards and so did you kids, and I'd write the date on the envelope

and add it to this box. I've had to change boxes a few times to hold the ones I've saved.

"Gram?" I asked "Have you ever written down the stories that go with the things in your chest?"

"I dated items as I included them but I haven't written stories about them." Gram replied quietly.

"There is so much family history in this chest," I said, "you should start a family history notebook with stories about the item and the events around it. How did you decide what to save?"

"Sometimes that was easy. I kept favorite baby clothes, a first dress or a sweater, and the first shoes were taken to a jewelry store and bronzed, but as the three children got older and I was busy, items went in much more slowly."

Gram took out a long box and put it out on her bed. It was a wedding dress. A full length gown of white chantilly lace, taffeta and tulle. Gram had worn this dress when she married Grandpa in 1940.

I was surprised to see an American Flag in a military fold in Gram's chest.

"A flag, Gram?" I asked "Why would you have a flag and not use it?"

"This flag draped the casket of your great uncle Cliff. He was a WWI Veteran and suffered chemical burns during the war. He came and stayed with us for a while before he died in 1956. He had no immediate family so when he died mother thought we should have the flag. There are only 48 stars on this flag. Which ones are missing? Do you know?"

"Sure I know, Gram," I answered.

In the bottom corner was a tiny white dress and a little lace cap. Very gently, Gram lifted them out. "This was Grandpa's baby dress and his hat." Gram said as she gently straightened the fabric. "When we were babies, girls and boys both wore dresses while they were newborns. This outfit came from you great-grandmother's chest. There is a long line of treasure keepers in the family," Gram said with a hug for both mother and me.

"Let's go have a tea party," Gram said. "The chest needs to air and I'll repack it later. And Renne I will start a collection of stories."

Gram's Trunk Activities

1. Ask how your family preserves their history -- photos, letters, newspaper clippings, greeting cards, objects; in a trunk, closet or drawer?

2. Start a personal trunk in a shoe box. Be sure to date each artifact and write about why the item was included.

Family History

One way to learn about a period in history is to study what was happening in your own family at that time. You can also develop the ability to conduct interviews and write from oral accounts.

Activities

A. Conduct two interviews with individuals who lived through earlier times -- perhaps with a grandparent and someone else that age.

1. After you have decided which individuals you want to interview, write down five reasons you chose them. What interests you about each person?

2. Prepare a list of at least five questions to ask. Write your questions in a journal or learning log and keep a record of your interviews.

3. Decide how you will record the information from your interviews. Write it down? Audio tape? Video tape? Think about the advantages and disadvantages of each.

4. As you interview, follow interesting ideas or information with additional questions. Listen for information which you might use later in a story, poem, essay, etc.

B. Study a collection of photographs from earlier times, perhaps obtained from someone you interviewed. Consider several questions about the photographs:

1. What clues do you have to indicate when this picture was taken. Look in the background as well as at the focus of the picture.

2. What is in the picture that you may not understand? Who could you ask about it?

3. Take a good look at any people in the picture -- how are they dressed? How do their clothes or appearance differ from yours?

4. Do you respond differently to black and white pictures than to color?

5. Write down some of the things you observed, along with ideas and information to

support them.

C. Do newspaper and/or magazine research in the public library. Find out when your parents were born and investigate what was happening on the date(s) of their birth. You might investigate what was happening on your birthday during any given year in the past; choose the date of a historical event, or look at a date important to your family. Check for information such as:

1. Headlines and information about the story.

2. Other stories - local, state and national.

3. Interesting information from advertisements, movie listings, or other things that catch you attention.

4. What differences do you notice between earlier newspapers or magazines and today's?

D. Research what was happening to your family during an earlier decade: grandparents, parents, aunts and uncles, etc. Were there changes in such things as:

1. Mobility - Where did members of the family live and where did they move to?

2. Housing - What kinds of homes did family members live in? Where were their homes in relation to where they worked?

3. Occupations - What kinds of work did members of your family do in earlier times? Did the women have jobs outside the home? How does this information compare to occupations in your family today?

4. Education - What was the general level of educational attainment in your family- high school completion, college degrees, etc. How does that compare to today?

5. Write about the overall status of your family today compared to the time your grandparents were young. Is your family better off now than then? What information supports your opinion?

U.S. Department of Education
Office of Educational Research and Improvement (OERI)
National Library of Education (NLE)
Educational Resources Information Center (ERIC)

NOTICE

Reproduction Basis

☐ This document is covered by a signed "Reproduction Release (Blanket)" form (on file within the ERIC system), encompassing all or classes of documents from its source organization and, therefore, does not require a "Specific Document" Release form.

☒ This document is Federally-funded, or carries its own permission to reproduce, or is otherwise in the public domain and, therefore, may be reproduced by ERIC without a signed Reproduction Release form (either "Specific Document" or "Blanket").